

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 051375  
ORIGIN NEA-10

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INFO AMEMBASSY TUNIS IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY MADRID IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS STATE 051375

E.O. 11652:

TAGS: MASS, US, MO

SUBJECT: NEW YORK TIMES STORY ON ARMS SALES DECISION  
REF: STATE 50903  
1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF ARTICLE BY BERNIE GWERTMAN IN  
THE NEW YORK TIMES ON FEBRUARY 28:

BEGIN TEXT: THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION HAS BOWED TO SOME  
STRONG CONGRESSIONAL OPPOSITION AND DEFERRED INDEFINITELY  
A PLAN TO SELL AIRCRAFT AND HELICOPTERS TO MOROCCO FOR USE  
IN THE WESTERN SAHARA AGAINST ALGERIAN-BACKED GUERRILLAS,  
STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS SAID TODAY.

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PAGE 02 STATE 051375

ACCORDING TO THE OFFICIALS, SECRETARY OF STATE CYRUS R.  
VANCE DECIDED RECENTLY TO POSTPONE ANY ACTION ON MOROCCO'S  
URGENT REQUEST FOR MORE THAN 100 MILLION DOLLARS IN COUNTER-  
INSURGENCY PLANES AND HELICOPTERS FOR TWO BASIC REASONS.

THE FIRST WAS OPPOSITION VOICED BY SOME INFLUENTIAL MEMBERS  
OF CONGRESS, AND THE SECOND WAS CONCERN ABOUT HAVING TO

DEFEND A CONTROVERSIAL SALE TO MOROCCO AT A TIME WHEN THE ADMINISTRATION WAS FACING SEVERE CRITICISM OF ITS 4.8 BILLION DOLLAR PACKAGE OF SALES OF FIGHTER AIRCRAFT TO EGYPT, SAUDI ARABIA AND ISRAEL.

AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE GROWING CRITICISM OF THE PACKAGE SALE TO THOSE THREE COUNTRIES, SENATOR RICHARD STONE, DEMOCRAT OF FLORIDA, TOLD THE SENATE TODAY THAT HE HAD INFORMATION THAT SAUDI ARABIA HAD PLANS TO BUILD UP AN AIRBASE AT TABUK, CLOSE TO ISRAEL'S BORDERS, AND THAT THIS RAISED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CONTEMPLATED SALE OF F-15 AIRCRAFT TO SAUDI ARABIA.

WHILE NOT CONDEMNING THE SALE OUTRIGHT, MR. STONE, CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST, STRONGLY SUGGESTED HE WOULD OPPOSE THE SAUDI PART OF THE DEAL. MR. STONE IS A STRONG SUPPORTER OF ISRAEL.

STATE DEPARTMENT DIVIDED - THE MOROCCAN DEAL HAS AROUSED CONSIDERABLE DEBATE WITHIN THE ADMINISTRATION IN THE LAST TWO MONTHS, WITH THE STATE DEPARTMENT DIVIDED ON WHETHER MOROCCO SHOULD BE PERMITTED TO BUY THE PLANES AND HELICOPTERS IT REQUESTED. MOROCCAN FORCES ARE FIGHTING THE SO-CALLED POLISARIO REBELS IN THE PART OF THE FORMER SPANISH SAHARA THAT WAS PLACED UNDER MOROCCAN RULE WHEN UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 STATE 051375

THE TERRITORY WAS PARTITIONED IN 1975 BETWEEN MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA.

TO ALLOW MOROCCO TO USE THE AMERICAN EQUIPMENT IN THE WESTERN SAHARA, THE EQUIPMENT IN THE WESTERN SAHARA, THE UNITED STATES WOULD HAVE TO REWRITE AN 18-YEAR OLD MILITARY AGREEMENT WITH MOROCCO THAT BARS MOROCCO FROM DEPLOYING AMERICAN ARMS BEYOND ITS LEGAL BORDERS.

THE ADMINISTRATION, IN INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, HAD SAID THAT IT WOULD REVISE THE MILITARY ACCORD IF IT SOLD THE ARMS, BUT IT SAID THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD NOT RECOGNIZE MOROCCAN SOVEREIGNTY IN THE AREA.

MOROCCO HAD REQUESTED THE SALE OF 24 OV-10 ARMED RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT, KNOWN AS THE BRONCO, ORIGINALLY BUILT FOR COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS IN VIETNAM IN THE 1960'S BY ROCKWELL INTERNATIONAL. THE PLANE, A SLOW-FLYING TURBOPROP AIRCRAFT, IS CONSIDERED MORE EFFECTIVE AGAINST GUERRILLAS IN THE DESERT THAN THE AMERICAN F-5B'S THAT MOROCCO NOW HAS ALONG WITH 145 (SIC) MORE ADVANCED FRENCH-

MADE MIRAGE F-1'S.

IN ADDITION, THE UNITED STATES WAS ASKED TO SELL MOROCCO  
24 COBRA HELICOPTER GUNSHIPS MADE BY BELL AIRCRAFT.

THE TOTAL COST OF THE SALE WAS BELIEVED TO BE MORE THAN  
200 MILLION DOLLARS, INCLUDING SPARE PARTS AND TRAINING ,  
AND WAS TO BE OFFSET BY MILITARY CREDITS RUNNING AT 45  
MILLION DOLLARS YEARLY. SAUDI ARABIA HAS ALSO HELPED  
MOROCCO DEFRAY MILITARY EXPENSES IN THE PAST. END TEXT.

2. FOLLOWING IS PRESS GUIDANCE GIVEN TO DEPARTMENT PRESS  
SPOKESMAN FOR NOON BRIEFING ON FEBRUARY 28: BEGIN QUOTE:

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PAGE 04 STATE 051375

QUESTION: HAS THE ADMINISTRATION POSTPONED INDEFINITELY  
ITS ATTEMPT TO GET CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR ARMS SALES  
TO MOROCCO?

ANSWER: WE HAVE MADE NO DECISIONS ON RESPONDING TO  
MOROCCAN PROPOSALS TO BUY MILITARY ITEMS THAT MIGHT BE  
USED IN THE WESTERN SAHARA. WE ARE CONTINUING OUR  
CONSULTATIONS WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS ABOUT THE HANDLING  
OF THESE PROPOSALS.

QUESTION: IS IT CORRECT THAT AMENDMENT OF OUR SECURITY  
ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT WITH MOROCCO WOULD BE REQUIRED?

ANSWER: THIS IS ONE OF THE QUESTIONS WE ARE CONSULTING  
ABOUT. THE AGREEMENT LIMITS THE USE OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED  
BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT TO LEGITIMATE SELF-DEFENSE AND  
INTERNAL SECURITY WITHIN THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO.

QUESTION: WHAT IS THE U.S. GOVERNMENT POSITION ON THE  
HOSTILITIES IN THE SAHARA?

ANSWER: WE HAVE FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH ALL THE COUNTRIES  
DIRECTLY INVOLVED AND WE CONTINUE TO HOPE THAT THE DISPUTE  
CAN BE SETTLED ON A REGIONAL BASIS, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE  
UNGA, AND WE NOTE THE REPORT THAT AN OAU MEETING ON THE  
SUBJECT MAY BE HELD IN LATE MARCH IN LIBREVILLE (GABON).  
END QUOTE.

3. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON SUBJECT, SPOKESMAN STATED  
ONLY THAT QUESTION WAS STILL UNDER CONSIDERATION BY THE  
ADMINISTRATION. THERE WERE NO FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS. VANCE

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